

SENATOR WILL: Right.

CLERK: Senator Lindsay has an amendment, but I have a note he wishes to withdraw AM1207.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: It is withdrawn.

CLERK: Senator Wesely, AM1451. (Amendment can be found on page 1503 of the Legislative Journal.)

PRESIDENT ROBAK: The Chair recognizes Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President, finally to the amendment that really counts, or at least one of them. This amendment is actually from myself and Senator Hall and it deals with two pieces of legislation that address some concerns with health insurance in Nebraska. First, let me reiterate. LB 837 is the bill that makes some changes in the small group reform bill we passed last year, expanding from 25 to 50 the size of employers that are covered by the protections of that bill. So it's a very important bill that expands on the bill we passed last year. Now the amendment before you, AM1451, does two things. It takes LB 279, which is a bill Senator Hall introduced and which was advanced unanimously by the Banking Committee, which extends for two years a bill that we passed a few years ago dealing with CHIP, the Comprehensive Health Insurance Pool. Currently premiums offset the costs of the bill or fall short, the insurance company premiums cover that on behalf of the state and the problem is that there is one entity, Blue Cross and Blue Shield HMO, I believe, that is bumping up against their CHIP assessment being as great or greater than their premium tax liability. And so this provision that we passed a few years ago, which we sunsetted for January 1 of '96, under this amendment would go to January 1 of '98, that says that if you are...the CHIP assessment can't be greater than your premium tax liability, so it protects insurance companies from paying above and beyond the premium tax which they are liable for. And again, that's LB 279 if you wish to look in the bill book. The other element of the amendment deals with the amended version of LB 838 which is another bill the Banking Committee advanced without opposition and it deals with the study of the possibility of pooling health care coverages. There has been a grant issued to the Department of Health and they are looking to move forward with that. They would like direction from the Legislature on the issues they wish to look at. This language